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ABSTRACT

A study identified the verbal and nonverbal behaviors that people associate with flirting as opposed to sexual harassment, determined whether people could successfully distinguish between flirting and sexual harassment, and examined the relationship between variables that might affect the first two objectives. Subjects, 57 females and 32 males from undergraduate courses at a mid-south university, participated as part of a course research requirement. Each participant completed measures of listening style, empathy, and situational ethics. Students then viewed one of eight brief videotape segments and were asked if flirting or sexual harassment occurred, and who started the flirting. Results indicated that: (1) 40.74% of the participants perceived sexual harassment in the flirting scenarios; (2) 78.89% of the participants believed flirting occurred in the sexual harassment scene which displayed no outwardly friendly flirting behavior; (3) only empathy subscales were significantly correlated with the perceptions of flirting and sexual harassment; (4) in the flirting condition with the female as superior, participants with a preference for action and content listening styles were not likely to identify verbal flirting or verbal sexual harassment; and (5) in the flirting condition with the male as superior, participants with a preference for the people listening style tended to identify verbal flirting. Findings demonstrate the confusion that exists in distinguishing flirting from sexually harassing behavior. (Contains 99 references, 3 notes, 1 figure, and 8 tables of data. An appendix lists verbal utterances and nonverbal communication behaviors in each of the conditions.) (RS)

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Flirting and Sexual Harassment in the Workplace: An Exploratory Study

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Researchers have typically had difficulty accounting for people's perceptions and interpretations when it comes to defining sexual harassment in the workplace (Booth-Butterfield, 1983; 1985; 1986; 1987; Coles, 1986; Collins & Blodgett, 1981; Gutek, Morasch, & Cohen, 1983; Gutek & Nakamura, 1983; Padgitt & Padgitt, 1986; Reilly, Lott, & Gollogly, 1986; Ellis, Rhodes, & Ford, 1992). The lack of a clear idea of what people do and do not perceive as sexual harassment is one difficulty limiting research on the topic and the application of research findings to the practical (applied) problem of dealing with sexual harassment in organizations (York, 1989).

Empirical determination of the *behaviors* and *variables* that constitute sexual harassment and affect perceptions of what constitutes sexual harassment would enable employers to write more effective policy statements, develop programs for helping employees recognize when something they say or do might be construed as sexual harassment, learn how to communicate appropriately with members of the opposite sex so that innocent behaviors cannot be misconstrued as sexual harassment, and learn how to respond appropriately when confronted with sexual harassment.

To prevent incidence of sexual harassment, many organizations have taken numerous steps to inform their employees about the nature of sexual harassment and its consequences. These policies provide some legal relief for the organization if the procedures are followed in a sexual harassment complaint, but they do little to help sort through the social-sexual behaviors that constitute nonharassing sexual behavior, or flirting, from those that constitute harassing sexual behavior.

Statement of the Problem

The present study started as an extension of work conducted by Ellis et al. (1992) and a study conducted by Keyton (1992). The Ellis et al. study was concerned with identifying whether *ethical ideology,* along with other selected variables, might affect the extent to which people *perceive* certain behaviors as sexually harassing. The Keyton study tested *flirting behaviors* and interpretations of those behaviors in two contexts--social and work.

An unexpected finding of the Ellis et al. study was that behaviors the researchers thought were clearly sexually harassing, the subjects had difficulty identifying as sexually harassing. Part of their difficulty seemed to be related to drawing a distinction between sexual harassment and flirting. .

In her study, Keyton reported that "flirting was not reserved for targets with whom the initiator had or wished a romantic involvement" (p. 18). She felt that this finding indicated the ambiguous nature of sexualized communication, particularly since she found friendly behavior to be the most frequently used flirting behavior. As such, she reported that a friendliness dimension appears to provide a baseline for a variety of heterosexual relationships whether the relational intentions are platonic, romantic, or sexual. Given this commonalty, she concluded that "it is no wonder that there is little society agreement about the point at which acceptable flirting becomes unwelcomed sexual harassment" (p. 18).

A necessary condition for the perception of flirting, as opposed to harassment, is that receivers must view themselves as active, reciprocating participants in the interaction, rather than targets of sexual communication that they wish to avoid (Booth-Butterfield, 1989; Coles, 1986; Simon & Montgomery, 1987; Keyton, 1992). For sexual harassment not to occur it would also be important that an individual sending a potentially sexual message be aware of the possible misinterpretations of such a message. Making distinctions and avoiding misinterpretations would require a certain degree of sensitivity on the part of the senders and receivers of the communication. As such, it would seem reasonable that individuals sensitive to the needs of others (good *listeners* with strong *empathic abilities*) might be more capable of distinguishing between flirting and sexually harassing messages.

The fact that sexual harassment involves "...offensive actions...perpetrated upon...targets," and that the communication associated with sexual harassment is communication the targets "...wish to avoid," suggests that sexual harassment involves *inappropriate* and/or *undesirable* behaviors. According to Loewy (1989), the area of *ethics* deals with the kinds of conduct and human virtues that an individual or society finds *desirable* or *appropriate*. Therefore, it seems possible that an individual's ethical ideology might affect his or her perceptions of behaviors that might be interpreted to be flirting as opposed to behaviors that might be interpreted to be sexual harassment.

Given the conclusions reported by Ellis et al. and Keyton regarding the difficulty people have distinguishing between flirting and sexual harassment, and given the importance of being able to do so in creating acceptable interactions between men and women in the workplace, the present study had three overriding objectives: identify the verbal and nonverbal behaviors that people associate

with flirting as opposed to sexual harassment, determine whether people could successfully distinguish between flirting and sexual harassment, and examine the relationship between variables that might affect the first two objectives. Specifically, the current study addressed the following questions:

1. Do subjects in general identify and interpret flirting behaviors differently than sexually harassing behaviors?

2. Will ethical ideology be related to the ability to distinguish between verbal/nonverbal flirting behaviors and verbal/nonverbal sexually harassing behaviors?

3. Will empathic ability be related to the ability to distinguish between verbal/nonverbal flirting behaviors and verbal/nonverbal sexually harassing behaviors?

4. Will listener style be related to the ability to distinguish between verbal/nonverbal flirting behaviors and verbal/nonverbal sexually harassing behaviors?

BACKGROUND

Recently, communication researchers devoted an entire issue of the *Journal of Applied Communication* to the topic of sexual harassment. In that issue, the editor, Julia Wood (1992), argues that:

> the language of male-female flirtation entails assumptions of an established social-intimate relationship, relatively equal partners who have choices about what to allow or not, and amorous or friendly feelings and motives. Such assumptions are sharply discordant with the dynamics of sexual harassment (p. 353).

Wood goes on to point out that in some cases, those who have been victims of sexual harassment may have come to the realization that what developed into sexual harassment started as a more harmless version of male-female interaction: ***flirting*** (e.g., see Case 10, "Our Stories" . . . , 1992). This observation is illustrative of a dilemma that everyone seems to confront when it comes to defining sexual harassment:

> sexual harassment is not a purely objective phenomenon but one based on an individual's perception of another's behavior, which may be affected by any number

> of factors that make up a situational context. Behavior that one person sees as sexual harassment another might see as innocent flirtation [underline added] (p. 831).

Defining Sexual Harassment

Writers and researchers seem to agree that sexual harassment is non reciprocal behavior and does not include mutually satisfactory, no-job-related-strings-attached relationships in the office. Most also agree that at some level of harassment there is an element of subjectivity: whether a particular experience is seen as innocuous and tolerable, offensive, or threatening may depend in part on the victim and/or the person exhibiting the behavior (e.g., Booth-Butterfield, 1989; Patterson, 1983; Safran, 1976; Wise & Stanley, 1987). In other words, sexual harassment involves *power* (non reciprocal behavior), and people's *perceptions* play an important role in determining what are sexually harassing behaviors.

The courts that adjudicate such matters rely on the EEOC Guidelines that define sexual harassment as:

> unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature [when] submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, [when] submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decision, [or when] such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment (EEOC, 1987).

Koen's (1989) review of the 57 federal court cases decided and reported since the initial Meritor Savings Bank, FSB vs. Vinson (1986) case identifies two categories of sexual harassment claims: quid pro quo harassment and hostile environment. "Quid pro quo harassment is created when an employee is forced to choose between giving in to a superior's sexual demands or forfeiting an economic benefit (i.e., salary increase, promotion, continued employment, etc.). . . A claim of hostile environment is based upon the concept that the sexual conduct unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment" (p.

291). While quid pro quo is most often seen as harassment, a plaintiff must show that the harassment received in a hostile environment resulted in a loss of economic benefit.

Defining Flirting

Littlejohn (1989) approached a definition of flirting from an interpersonal attraction perspective. In doing so, he looked at relationship development as explained by two influential theories: balance theory and social exchange theory. Balance theory relies upon the system of colleagues' positive orientation toward one another. These orientations may be based upon actual communication or upon an attribution one makes about the other. "Attraction is thus explained in terms of the system dynamics involving the participants' various interrelated orientations" (Littlejohn, 1989, p. 185). Thibaut and Kelley's social exchange theory holds that the attraction in an interpersonal relationship is based upon the consequences of the relationship. In the workplace, flirting may occur because the exogenous outcome of appearing to be "macho" or "feminine" is highly prized by one's peers. Of course, there may be real interest in the other person and one flirts hoping to capture the endogenous factors that develop from the unique interactions of this particular relationship.

Montgomery (1989) sought to identify the verbal and nonverbal behaviors associated with flirtatious communication and meanings attached to those behaviors. Open-ended data from both the initiator and target perspective were content coded, resulting in nine specific, discrete behaviors and six interpretations of abstracted meanings attached to a set of behaviors. These behaviors and interpretations are shown in Figure 1 in the rank order they were identified in Montgomery's (1989) study.

Insert Figure 1 here

Others have measured similar behaviors as indexes of flirting. Rowland, Crisler, and Cox (1982) found that subjects overwhelmingly perceived sustained eye contact, intimate physical contact, humorous sexual remarks, and being asked out on a date as flirting behaviors. While some

subjects did identify brief eye contact, brief physical contact, and non-sexual humor as flirting behaviors, there was less agreement (each less than 30 percent) about these behaviors.

Flirting and Sexual Harassment in the Workplace

There is a logical extension from flirting to sexual harassment since many of the same behaviors (sexual comments, eye gaze, touch) are common to both. If those behaviors are interpreted as flirting in the social context, it is approved and encouraged. However, those same behaviors at work may not be welcomed and may therefore be interpreted as harassment.

Gutek, Cohen, and Konrad (1990) addressed both harassing and nonharassing sexual behavior in the workplace, but they failed to discover what makes one behavior be identified as harassing and another as flirting. The authors did assert, however, that "a sexualized work environment, in which sexual jokes, comments, innuendoes, and sexual or seductive dress are tolerated, condoned, or encouraged, is likely to encourage people of both genders to make direct sexual overtures" (Gutek et al., 1990, p. 565).

York (1989) found that three cues--the victim's reaction, the existence of coercion, and job consequences for the victim--accounted for 75 percent of the variance in judgments of sexual harassment by equal opportunity employment officers from universities and colleges. Similar judgments were made by freshman university students, senior university students, and graduate students. Homogeneity among these groups indicates that "both experts and naive individuals agree on a set of elements that constitute sexual harassment" (p. 845). York's results, based on written case presentations, do little, however, to demonstrate exactly what behaviors are considered harassing.

With this in mind, an overriding concern of the study described in this paper was whether or not people can distinguish between flirting and sexual harassment based on observing the verbal and nonverbal *behaviors* the literature indicates are indexes of each. Therefore, the first research question for this study was:

> ***Research Question 1.*** *Will subjects in general be able to distinguish between flirting and sexually harassment based on observing the verbal and nonverbal behaviors associated with each?*

Other Related Variables

From an individual perspective, most of us are cognizant of our own flirting and we are aware when others flirt with us. Duck (1988) remarks: the "process of signaling interest in or willingness to become involved with someone else thus entails some quite subtle and skilled efforts" (p. 52). The authors of this paper believe that the ". . . subtle and skilled efforts" an individual needs to distinguish between flirting and sexual harassment will be affected by factors such as **ethical ideology**, **empathic ability**, and **listener style.**

Ethical Ideology. Sexualized behavior in the workplace has been described as a reciprocal behavior such as flirting that involves personal attraction on the part of both parties. And it has been described as a non reciprocal behavior such as sexual harassment that involves power and abuse. As sexual harassment, sexualized behavior is a major problem in today's workplace--a problem with legal ramifications. But seldom, if ever, is sexual harassment described in terms of "right" and "wrong."

What is "right" and what is "wrong" or what is "good" and what is "bad" are the basic questions in ethical situations. In any given circumstance, ethical questions are either implicitly or explicitly involved when a decision has to be made by an individual or society about what is the appropriate thing to do. The choices that individuals make about how to respond to life events are informed and directed by their ethics (Johannesen, 1981).

Forsyth (1979) suggests that ethics can be understood by comparing two schools of thought in the philosophy of ethics. One school of thought, *relativism,* suggests that individuals operate from an ideology related to ethical skepticism. In moral philosophy, a skeptical point of view recognizes that there are many different ways to look at morality. For example, Fletcher (1966) argues that morality should focus on "a contextual appropriateness - not the 'good' or the 'right' but the 'fitting' " (1973, p. 186), with all actions based on love of others. Thus, the relativist distrusts absolute moral principles and argues instead that each situation must be examined individually.

On the *absolutist* side of the continuum are individuals who reject the use of a situation's unique circumstances as a basis for moral evaluation and instead appeal to natural law or rationality to determine ethical judgments. Thus, acts are to be judged as moral or immoral through their

comparison with some universal moral rule that is absolute. From this perspective a moral principle can allow no exceptions, regardless of the consequences (Kant, 1962).

Applying these two extreme ethical ideologies to situations involving flirting and sexual harassment suggests some interesting effects on distinguishing between flirting and sexual harassment. Since the *relativist* tends to focus on "contextual appropriateness" and examines each situation "individually," people who subscribe to a relativist ideology would examine each incident involving sexual communication as unique. And depending on the person's evaluation of the "contextual appropriateness," he or she would see that a lot of verbal and nonverbal messages have the *potential to be interpreted as flirting*. However, this would also mean that just as many messages have the *potential to be interpreted as sexual harassment*. Thus, from this perspective, distinguishing between flirting and sexual harassment would be *relative*.

On the other hand, since the *absolutist* tends to reject the use of a "situation's unique circumstances as a basis for moral evaluation and instead appeal to natural law or rationality to determine ethical judgments," people who subscribe to an absolute ideology would not need to examine each incident involving sexual communication as unique. Instead, that person would use some universal moral rule that is absolute. Since this perspective can allow no exceptions, regardless of the consequences, he or she would see a verbal or nonverbal message as clearly being either flirting or sexually harassing based on a judgment that uses a universal moral rule of what is "right" and what is "wrong." Thus, from this perspective, distinguishing between flirting and sexual harassment would be *absolute*.

With the two perspectives in mind, if respondents are shown a series of scenarios that describe situations that range from friendly to flirting to sexually harassing and are asked to distinguish between each scenario, it could be argued that absolutists would be more accurate because they would be so definite in their judgment of each scenario that they would always say that something is *definitely* sexually harassing or *definitely* flirting. Conversely, the relativist would always see the exception to the circumstances surrounding each scenario and therefore tend to rate more scenarios as *possibly* sexually harassing or *possibly* flirting, thereby having a less accurate score. On the one hand, it could be argued that people who are relativists would be more accurate than people who are

absolutists because the relativist would see each scenario for what it is--unique--whereas the absolutist would only see the sexual nature of all the scenarios and judge them all in the same way using a universal moral code.

In either case, the literature does not provide sufficient evidence in this area to allow the development of hypotheses. Therefore, a second research question is offered for the purposes of this study:

> ***Research Question 2.*** *What is the nature of the relationship between ethical ideology and accuracy when it comes to identifying verbal and nonverbal behaviors that distinguish flirting from sexual harassment?*

Empathy. Early research in the area of empathy focused on either its cognitive or affective dimensions (e.g., Hogan, 1969; Kerr & Speroff, 1954; Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972; Stotland, Mathews, Sherman, Hansson, & Richardson, 1978). It is now recognized that the empathic process includes both these dimensions (Chee, Yelsma, & Rhodes; 1989; Davis, 1983; Deutsch & Madle, 1975; Hoffman, 1977). Thus, the process of empathy is now thought to involve not only the ability to feel for another, but to also take the perspective of another.

In studying individual differences in empathy, Elms (1966) hypothesized that the use of one's imagination was a fundamental process in facilitating empathy. What it did was make one's experience of another's situation more vivid. For example, the emotional charge in plays and movies like "Cape Fear" and "Fatal Attraction" evoke empathic responses from people in the audience. It may very well be that one's ability to identify with fictitious characters in books, novels and movies may indicate one's ability to identify with another's perspective. Chee et al. (1989) reported similar results.

Sillars and Scott (1983), in writing about interpersonal perception between intimates, state that intimacy exists in a relationship where there is "repeated interaction, higher self-disclosure, high interdependence (i.e., mutual influence), and high emotional involvement" (p. 154). Hence, the greater the empathy, the higher the level of emotional involvement in a relationship. Researchers, like Nye (1982), Spanier (1980) and Sieburg (1985), agree that empathy is the key to developing and maintaining positive emotional involvement in relationships.

Generally speaking, research does not support the biological assertion that women are feeling oriented and men are thought oriented. Instead, Ickes, Robertson, Tooke, and Teng (1986) suggest that the dominant processing of feelings and/or thoughts may have more to do with a person's psychological orientation (gender-role orientation) than with his or her biological gender. Even so, they did find that during social cognition, women report a greater percentage of meta-perspective entries than men. This would allow the individual to adopt the other person's perspective and to show more involvement/empathy. Other studies suggest that there are no significant differences in the empathic skills between men and women (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974; McDonald; 1976; Olesker & Balter, 1972; Breisinger, 1976).

Montgomery (1990) contends that men flirt differently than women because men are tuned into the physical aspects of the relationship while women look to establish friendships. Abbey (1982) supports this view. "Men are more likely to perceive the world in sexual terms and to make sexual judgments than women are. The predicted effect that men misperceive friendliness from women as seduction, appears to be merely one manifestation of this broader male sexual orientation" (p. 836-837). Similarly, Downey and Vitulli (1987) found that men show more interest in returning flirtation. Perhaps these are the reasons Rowland et al. (1982) found that "males believed that flirting was less effective for them than did females" (p. 355).

When it comes to sexual harassment, research has shown that males and females do not agree on the identification of harassing behavior (Beauvais, 1986; Coles, 1986; Konrad & Gutek, 1986; Padgitt & Padgitt, 1986; Reilly et al., 1986). Women often maintain that men "just don't get it"--that even after repeated protests men fail to understand that gestures, actions, and verbal messages with sexual meanings are unwelcome and can cause female workers great distress.

In daily interactions in the workplace, the ability to take the perspective of another--to imagine one's self in the other person's position--should lead to greater understanding and tolerance. Similarly, the ability to respond affectively toward another or to feel for him or her should draw both people closer together. Hence, understanding the world from the point of view of and feeling for another, especially when these are reciprocated, may lead to a much greater understanding within the relationship. One would suspect, then, that if men and women could put themselves in one another's

position they would have a greater understanding of how the other might be interpreting and responding to any sexualized communications. Thus, empathic ability should be related to the ability to distinguish between flirting and sexual harassment.

Hypothesis 1. *There should be a relationship between empathic ability and the ability to identify verbal and nonverbal behaviors that distinguish flirting from sexual harassment.*

Listening. Until recently, most listening studies have focused on lecture comprehension listening. For this reason, theorists claim that most listening tests fail to measure critical situational differences that may influence the listening process (Kelly, 1967; Backlund, Brown, & Jandt, 1980). Many of the "lecture" listening tests, for example, ignore the subtleties of emotional tone, nonverbal cues, language, and situational context (Rubin, Daly, McCroskey, & Mead, 1982; Roberts, 1985; Rubin & Roberts, 1987). And yet, most people would agree that when they describe someone as a "good listener" they mean that person is *sensitive* to subtleties such as emotional tone, nonverbal cues, language, and situational context. Most people would also agree that special demands are placed on a person in situations where she or he has to listen to sexual communication that imply flirting or sexual harassment. The ability to listen well enough to distinguish between the two types of sexual communication would require a certain degree of conversational sensitivity.

Examining gender differences during conversational listening in natural interactions, Emmert (1986) found that males listen more intently when they were instructed to "really get to know the other person," had a high interpersonal inclusion need, and were paired with a similar other in a dyad. For females, increased listening behavior occurred when their perception was that their partner exercised control over their self-disclosure, was physically attractive, or was not high in task attractiveness. If the interaction was not a pleasant one and the women had a low interpersonal inclusion need, then women's listening behavior also increased.

Although inconclusive, the results of other studies also seem to give women the advantage in certain listening abilities. Research reports suggest that women are better than men at verbal memory (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974; Watson & Rhodes, 1992); at decoding nonverbal behaviors such as facial expressions, especially when exposed to both visual and auditory stimuli (Bassili, 1979; Hall, 1978;

Watson & Rhodes, 1992); and that women are also more accurate than men in perceiving gender-related traits (Card, Jackson, Stollak, & Ialongo, 1986). While these research results do not provide conclusive evidence regarding gender and listening effectiveness, they do suggest that men and women listen differently.

Focusing on the idea that men and women listen differently, Watson and Barker (1988) have argued that rather than thinking about people as "good" or "bad" listeners, people should be thought of as having different *listening style preferences*. Basically, they describe listener preferences as differences in the ways that people choose to listen. More specifically, they define these style preferences as habitual responses that have been cognitively structured, practiced, and reinforced over time. As such, most individuals have learned to rely on a particular listener style. Furthermore, they contend that listener preferences are determined by how, where, when, and what types of information individuals most like to receive from others. This would imply that some people appear to be more willing to listen to factual information or statistics while others appear to prefer to listen to personal examples and illustrations.

Recently, Watson and Barker (1992) reported findings that support their contentions. In a study that describes the development and validation of the Listener Preference Profile (LPP), they found that the predominant female people-oriented listener preference (20 percent) was most closely aligned with a relational rather than a task orientation. Conversely, they reported that the males' predominant preferences, content-oriented (12 percent) or action-oriented (14 percent), were most closely aligned with a task orientation. In addition, they found that their LPP results also supported findings that suggest differences between males and females in conversational sensitivity (Berryman & Wilcox, 1980; Ray & Bostrom, 1990, Emmert, 1986), interrupting behavior (Esposito, 1979; Kennedy & Camden, 1981; 1983; Smeltzer & Watson, 1986), and empathy (Hanson & Mullis, 1985; Trotter, 1983).

All of this would suggest that there should be a relationship between a person's listening preferences and his or her ability to distinguish between flirting and sexual harassment. Therefore, this study also tested a second hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2. *There should be a relationship between listening style and the ability to identify verbal and nonverbal behaviors that distinguish flirting from sexual harassment.*

METHODOLOGY

Subjects

Participants for the study came from undergraduate courses at a mid-south university. In total, 57 females and 32 males were recruited for and participated in the investigation. Participation was part of a course research requirement. Participants ranged from 18 to 50; the mean age was 24.77 years. Over 80 percent of the participants worked part- or full-time. About 75 percent of the participants were Caucasian; about 25 percent were African-American.

Procedures

Each participant came to the testing room knowing he/she would be involved in an investigation about how people communicated at work. Each participant initially completed a questionnaire that included a 24-item measure of listening style (Watson & Barker, 1988), a 28-item empathy (Davis, 1980; 1983) measure, and a 20-item situational ethics (Forsyth, 1980) scale. Procedures described by Watson and Barker (1988) were used to identify listening preference; procedures described by Davis (1983) were used to calculate empathy subscales; and procedures described by Forsyth (1980) were used to calculate high and low categories of the ethics subscales and for categorizing participants as being of one specific ethical ideology. Demographic data on employment and marital status were also collected. Participants were then escorted to another testing room to view four videotape scenarios.

Measurements

Empathy

The Davis (1980) *Interpersonal Reactivity Index* (IRI) consists of four separate but related subscales created to measure both cognitive and affective empathy. He described the four subscales as follows: (1) The Perspective Taking (PT) scale assesses an individual's tendency to adopt the

perspective or point of view of others; (2) The Fantasy (FS) scale taps a respondent's tendency to transpose him or herself imaginatively into the feelings and actions of fictitious characters in books, movies, and plays; (3) The Empathic Concern (EC) scale assesses a tendency for a respondent to experience feelings of warmth, compassion, and concern for others undergoing negative experiences; and (4) The Personal Distress (PD) scale measures an individual's "self-oriented" feelings of personal anxiety, discomfort, and unease when witnessing negative experiences of others (Davis, 1980; 1983).

Subjects who scored above the mean in the PT, EC, and FS subscales were categorized as high in empathy, and those who scored below the mean were classified as low in empathy. On the other hand, those who scored below the mean in the PD scale were categorized as high in empathy, as compared to those who scored above the mean. Reliability and validity studies have been reported by Davis (1980, 1983).

Listener Style

Watson and Barker's (1988) *Listener Preference Profile* (LPP) was designed to identify habitual listening preferences. The instrument consists of four listener preferences labeled *people-*, *content-*, *action-*, and *entertainment-oriented* listening.[2]

Listeners demonstrate *people-oriented* preferences when they show caring and concern for others' feelings, identify the emotional states of others, internalize/adopt emotional states of others, or try to find areas of common interest. *Content-oriented* preferences are demonstrated when people test or evaluate facts and evidence, welcome complex and challenging information, listen to facts before forming judgments and opinions, or favor listening to technical information. When people jump ahead and finish thoughts of speakers, get frustrated by unorganized speakers, focus on inconsistencies and errors in messages, or show impatience when speakers ramble, they are showing an *action-oriented* preference. A person with a *entertainment-oriented* preference simply enjoys the process of listening, but only if he or she findings the topic and/or situation interesting.

Ethical Ideology

Respondents' ethics were measured with the *Ethics Position Questionnaire* (EPQ) (Forsyth, 1980). This 20-item questionnaire is theoretically based on absolutism and relativism. According to Forsyth, an individual "rejects universal moral rules in favor of relativism...whereas others believe in and make use of moral absolutes when making judgments" (p. 175). Forsyth suggests that the second dimension underlying individual variation in ethical decision making is idealism. High idealists assume that the correct or right action can always be obtained, but low idealists assume that 'rightness' cannot always be attained. These dichotomies yield two general classifications of ethical ideologies:. relativism and idealism.

Respondents answer to the EPQ with a Likert format ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). Examples of items from the EPQ are "A person should make certain that their actions never intentionally harm another even to a small degree," and "Moral actions are those which closely match ideals of the most 'perfect' action" (Forsyth, 1980, p. 178). Forsyth reported concurrent and predictive validity levels to be adequate.

Flirting and Sexual Harassment

Due to the exploratory nature of this investigation and the assumption that participants would be able to discriminate among friendly, flirting, and harassing relational communication in the workplace, scenarios were taped for a 4 (condition) x 2 (sex of superior) manipulations. Friendly, flirting, flirting to harassing, and harassing were the four conditions and each scene was taped with both a female and male as the superior. In keeping with the EEOC definition of sexual harassment, the superior was the harasser and the subordinate the victim/target in each scenario. The same scripts were used for both sex manipulations as Wilkins and Andersen (1991) found no significant gender differences in management communication and Staley and Cohen (1988) found no significant differences in communication and social style in a more generalized setting. While the researchers were able to control verbal utterances (via the script) and gross nonverbal behaviors (e.g., sitting on the desk, touching), other subtle nonverbal behavioral differences appeared spontaneously. The

complete transcripts are shown in Appendix A. Taping was done in a professional setting; actors wore professional clothing.

Data collection

The eight videotape scenarios were randomly assigned to the four taped sequences to control for order effects. Each scenario lasted approximately 1-1/2 minutes. Participants were randomly assigned to watch tape A, B, C, and D, with attempts to balance gender and race. After each scenario, the researchers asked if flirting occurred. If the participant indicated that flirting did occur, the researchers asked the participant "What verbal or nonverbal behavior did you see or hear that made you identify it as flirting?" The researchers recorded on a verbatim and nonverbally notated script which verbal and nonverbal elements the participant identified. Additionally, participants were asked who started the flirting, how the target responded, and how appropriate the behavior identified was for the work environment.

Upon the completion of this data collection, the participant was asked if sexual harassment occurred. The same protocol as above was used for those verbal and nonverbal behaviors the participant identified as harassing. If sexual harassment was identified in the scenario, participants were asked to describe the behavior according to the five elements of the EEOC guidelines (described below). Upon completion of this portion of the data collection, the next scenario was viewed. Identical procedures were used for each of the four scenarios. After the final scenario, participants were debriefed and thanked for their participation.

RESULTS

Manipulations

Four Conditions

Condition one was developed to display flirting behavior. Separate scenes were developed with both a male and a female as the superior. In manipulation checks, 96.67 percent of participants identified that flirting did occur; 89.66 percent correctly identified the superior as initiating the flirting. The response of the subordinate was judged to be equally spread among neutral, positive, and

negative. Of the participants watching the **female** as superior condition, 20 percent judged the subordinate's response as neutral, 28.24 percent judged the subordinate's response as positive, and 3.53 percent judged the subordinate's response as negative. Of the participants watching the **male** as superior condition, judgments of the subordinate's response were 18.82 percent as neutral, 21.18 percent as positive, and 8.24 percent as negative. Although condition one (flirting) was not intended to display sexual harassment, 40.74 percent viewing the **female** superior condition believed sexual harassment to occur while 51.85 percent of those viewing the **male** superior condition believed sexual harassment to occur.

Condition two was developed to display flirting behavior that progressed into sexual harassing behavior. Separate scenes were developed with both **female and male** as the superior. In manipulation checks, 86.56 percent of participants identified that flirting did occur and 84.44 percent of participants identified that sexual harassment occurred. For flirting, there was total agreement on who initiated the flirting; for sexual harassment, 97.37 percent agreed on who started the sexual harassment. The response of the subordinate was judged to be negative; 75 percent of participants judged the subordinate's response to be negative to the flirting behaviors, and 79.17 percent judged the subordinate's response to be negative to the sexual harassment behavior.

Condition three was developed to display sexually harassing behavior. Separate scenes were developed with both **female and male** as the superior. In manipulation checks, all participants identified harassing behaviors; 98.89 percent correctly identified the superior as initiating the harassment. The subordinate's response was evaluated as negative by 89.29 percent of participants. Although condition three was not intended to display flirting behavior, 78.89 percent of the participants viewing this condition did perceive flirting behavior to occur, and 98.6 percent believed the superior initiated the flirting.

Condition four was developed to display friendly behavior. Separate scenes were developed with both **female and male** as the superior. In manipulation checks, 91.11 percent of participants agreed that flirting did not occur; there was total agreement that sexual harassment did not occur.

Evaluations of Sexually Harassing Behavior

The two conditions developed to display sexually harassing behavior were developed using the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission guidelines (29 C. F. R. $ 1604.11, 1986). Harassment that falls under these guidelines is a violation of Section 703 of Title VII.[3]

For this study, participants were asked to respond to five definitional statements if they perceived sexual harassment in a taped scene. The five statements were (1) unwelcome sexual advances; (2) request for sexual favors; (3) explicit or implicit understanding that submission to such conduct is a term or condition of the subordinate's employment; (4) explicit or implicit understanding that submission to or rejection of such conduct could used as the basis for an employment decision; and (5) interfered with an individual's work performance or created an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment. Responses were given on Likert-type scales (0 = not at all like this, 4 = very much like this).

The results are shown in Table 1. In general, responses to each of the five statements increase through conditions one to three. It should be noted, however, that condition one does not contain verbal or nonverbal behaviors that can legally be defined as sexual harassment according to the EEOC Guidelines.

Insert Table 1 here

Participants also judged the appropriateness of flirting behaviors on a Likert-type scale (0=not appropriate at all, 4 = very appropriate for the workplace). Table 2 shows the results. Flirting demonstrated in condition one (flirting) was more appropriate for the workplace than flirting demonstrated in the scenes (conditions two and three) containing harassment.

Insert Table 2 here

Measurements

Ethical Ideologies

Forsyth (1980) reported that scale analysis of his EPQ resulted in two orthogonal factors (relativism and idealism), and was found to be nonsignificantly related to social desirability. Concurrent and predictive validity levels were tested and found to be adequate (see Table 3).

He also found that both idealism and relativism were related to age. In his sample, older individuals were less idealistic and less relativistic. For this sample, age was not related to idealism ($F=0.89$, $p=.348$, df 1,89) nor to relativism ($F=0.09$, $p=.760$, df 1,89). Using the sample means (Forsyth, 1980), scores on each subscale are categorized as high and low. High scores on each scale are categorized as situationists; low scores on each scale are categorized as exceptionists. A high idealism score coupled with a low relativism score is categorized as absolutist while a low idealism score coupled with a high relativism score is categorized as subjectivist. A chi-square was performed for these categorizations; there was no effect for sex or category. There were no significant differences ($F=4.224$, $p=.238$, df 3). Twenty-one were categorized as situationists, 17 as exceptionists, 24 as absolutists, and 27 as subjectivists (see Table 3). Idealism and relativisim were not related (see Table 4).

Insert Tables 3 & 4 here

Empathy

Davis (1980) reported significantly lower means for his sample for the four subscales on his IRI than found in this study (see Table 3). He developed the questionnaire on students in introductory psychology classes. This sample was dominated by communication majors. Davis provides no other demographic information on which to rationalize the differences in means. Perhaps this study's somewhat older sample with considerable work experience views the world differently Or, maybe communication majors have learned through their communication coursework to be more empathic. Davis also found significant differences between males and females for each of the four empathy subscales. Women displayed higher scores than men on each subscale. For this sample, females had

higher fantasy scores (F=6.61, p=.012, df 1,87; female mean=24.491, male mean 21.188). Females also had higher empathic concern scores (F=5.67, p=.020, df 1,87; female mean 28.842, male mean 26,688). There were no significant differences due to sex on the perspective taking and personal distress subscales.

Reliability and validity statistics have been reported as adequate by Davis (1980, 1983) (see Table 3).

Listener Style

The version of the Watson and Barker (1988) listening preference profile (LPP) used for this study has been subjected to few verifications. Two low item-to-total correlations indicated that items 12 and 22 should be dropped from the subscales. Both of these items were related to the *entertainment-oriented* subscale. The only reported difference for gender was on the *content-oriented* subscale (F=5.91, p=.017, df 1,84). Males had higher *content-oriented* scores (3.625) than females (3.000) (see Table 3).

Watson and Barker (1992) report satisfactorily high test-retest reliability estimates obtained for each scale: people-oriented (r = .71), content-oriented (r = .76), action-oriented (r = .71), and t*ime-oriented* (r = .63). Internal reliability estimates for the current study were not as high: people-oriented (r = .60), content-oriented (r = .58), action-oriented (r = .62), and *entertainment-oriented* (r = .42) (see Table 3). The authors of the current study used an older version of the LPP that contained an *entertainment-oriented* subscale instead of a time-oriented subscale. Given the low internal reliability (r = .42) for that subscale, it was dropped from the current study. Subsequent factor analysis by Mahon (1991) and Watson & Barker (1992) also resulted in dropping the *entertainment-oriented* subscale from the LPP and substituting a *time-oriented* subscale.

Predictive Tests

Judgments of Verbal and Nonverbal Behaviors

Research Question 1. *Will subjects in general be able to distinguish between flirting and sexually harassment based on observing the verbal and nonverbal behaviors associated with each?*

In this initial data analysis, the number of verbal utterances and nonverbal behaviors participants identified as flirting and as sexually harassing were counted for each scene. The means are shown in Table 5.

Insert Table 5 here

Relationship Between Ethical Ideologies and Flirting/Sexually Harassing Behaviors

Research Question 2. *What is the nature of the relationship between ethical ideology and accuracy when it comes to identifying verbal and nonverbal behaviors that distinguish flirting from sexual harassment?*

MANOVAs were used to test the participants' categorizations of ethical ideologies on the number of verbal and nonverbal flirting and harassment judgments they made. Due to the exploratory nature of the research, a separate test was computed for each of the eight scenes (4 conditions x gender of the superior). The categories of ethical ideology failed to predict any significant differences. Thus, participants perceived flirting and sexually harassing behaviors similarly regardless of ethical ideology. In this initial analysis, we were unable to test the variability of this construct among scenes.

Relationship Between Empathy and Flirting/Sexually Harassing Behaviors

Hypothesis 1. *There should be a relationship between empathic ability and the ability to identify verbal and nonverbal behaviors that distinguish flirting from sexual harassment.*

Canonical correlations were used to test the relationships of the empathy subscales to the perceptions of verbal and nonverbal flirting and sexually harassing behaviors. Separate tests were

computed for each of the eight scenes. Only condition two (flirting to sexual harassment with the **female** as the superior) produced significant findings.

The canonical correlation performed to test the relationship between the empathy subscales and the number of flirting and sexually harassing behaviors identified by participants for the flirting to sexual harassment video scene with the **female** as the superior resulted in a canonical correlation of .621 (38.5 percent of the variance) (see Table 6). With all four canonical correlations included, the significant chi-square was F-1.729, df=16, p=.050. After the first canonical pair, the remaining three canonical correlations were effectively zero and subsequent chi-square tests were not significant.

Insert Table 6 here

The first pair of canonical variates accounted for the significant relationship between the two sets of variables. Data on the pair of canonical variates are reported (Tabachinik & Fidell, 1989,) in Table 6. Shown in the table are correlations between the variables and the canonical variates, standardized canonical variate coefficients, within-set variance accounted for by the canonical variates (percent of variance), redundancies, and canonical correlations. Total percent of variance and total redundancy indicate that the canonical variates were minimally related.

With a cutoff of .3, the empathy subscale that was positively correlated with the flirting/harassing behavior variate was fantasy (r = .80) while both perspective taking and personal distress were minimally and negatively correlated (r = -.34 and -.32, respectively).

Of the behavioral set, identifications of verbal sexually harassing behavior was moderately and positively correlated (r = .57); nonverbal flirting behavior was minimally and positively correlated (r = .39); and nonverbal harassing behavior was negatively and moderately correlated (r = -.50). Thus, the first pair of canonical variates indicate that participants able to transport themselves to fictional situations were able to identify verbal sexually harassing behaviors and nonverbal flirting behaviors with nonverbal sexually harassing behaviors being negatively correlated.

Relationship Between Listening and Flirting/Sexually Harassing Behaviors

Hypothesis 2. *There should be a relationship between listening style and the ability to identify verbal and nonverbal behaviors that distinguish flirting from sexual harassment.*

Canonical correlations were also used to test the relationships of the listening subscales to the perceptions of verbal and nonverbal flirting and sexually harassing behaviors. Separate tests were computed for each of the eight scenes. The listening subscales were related to both flirting scenes (female superior and male superior).

Female superior. The canonical correlation performed to test the relationship between the listening subscales and the number of flirting and sexually harassing behaviors identified by participants for the flirting video scene with the **female** as the superior resulted in a canonical correlation of .623 (38.8 percent of the variance) (see Table 7). With all three canonical correlations included the chi-square was significant (F=2.570, df=12, p=.006). After the first canonical pair, the remaining two canonical correlations were effectively zero and subsequent chi-square tests were not significant.

Insert Table 7 here

Data on the pair of canonical variates appear in Table 7. The first pair of canonical variates accounted for the significant relationship between the two sets of variables. Total percent of variance and total redundancy indicate that the canonical variates were minimally related.

With a cutoff of .3, the listening subscales that were positively correlated with the flirting/harassing behavior variate were action (r = .69) and content (r = .77). Of the behavioral set, identifications of nonverbal sexually harassing behavior were moderately and positively correlated (r = .58) while verbal sexually harassing behavior and nonverbal flirting behavior were moderately and negatively correlated (r = -.52 and -.51, respectively). Thus, the first pair of canonical variates indicate that participants who may be impatient with speakers who are not consistent and logical and provide

lots of data were able to identify nonverbal sexually harassing behavior, with verbal sexually harassing behavior and nonverbal flirting behavior being moderately and negatively correlated.

Male superior. The canonical correlation performed to test the relationship between the listening subscales and the number of flirting and sexually harassing behaviors identified by participants in the flirting video scene with the **male** as the superior also showed significant results. The first canonical correlation was .652 (42.5 percent of the variance) (see Table 8). The remaining two canonical correlations were effectively zero. With all three canonical correlations included the chi-square was significant (F=1.975, df=12, p=.039). Subsequent tests were not significant.

Insert Table 8 here

The first pair of canonical variates accounted for the significant relationship between the two sets of variables. Data on the pair of canonical variates appear in Table 8. Total percent of variance and total redundancy indicate that the canonical variates were very minimally related.

With a cutoff of .3, the listening subscale that was moderately and positively correlated with the flirting/harassing behavior variate was people (r = .56). The action subscale was minimally and positively correlated (r = .35). Of the behavioral set, identifications of verbal and nonverbal flirting behavior were minimally and positively correlated (r = .46 and r = .39, respectively). The first pair of canonical variates indicate that participants with empathic, consistent, and at the same time, impatient listening preferences were able to identify both verbal and nonverbal flirting behavior.

DISCUSSION

To prevent incidence of sexual harassment, many organizations have taken numerous steps to inform their employees about the nature of sexual harassment and its consequences. These policies provide some legal relief for the organization if the procedures are followed in a sexual harassment complaint, but they do little to help sort through the social-sexual behaviors that constitute nonharassing sexual behavior, or flirting, from those that constitute harassing sexual behavior.

The lack of a clear idea of what people do and do not perceive as sexual harassment is one difficulty limiting research on the topic and the application of research findings to the practical (applied) problem of dealing with sexual harassment in organizations. The guiding premise for this study has been that empirical determination of the *behaviors* and *variables* that constitute sexual harassment and affect perceptions of what constitutes sexual harassment would enable employers to write more effective policy statements, develop programs for helping employees recognize when something they say or do might be construed as sexual harassment, learn how to respond appropriately to members of the opposite sex so that innocent behaviors cannot be misconstrued as sexual harassment, and learn how to respond appropriately when confronted with sexual harassment.

This exploratory study has been an attempt to take a first step in that direction. In taking this first step, two research questions and two hypotheses were addressed.

Research Question 1

The first research question was concerned with determining whether subjects would be able to distinguish between flirting and sexually harassment based on observing the verbal and nonverbal behaviors associated with each. It was addressed by creating the four scenarios (conditions), using those as the manipulation, and then checking subjects' perceptions of the manipulations.

Thus, the manipulation checks were intended to verify the differences in sexual interaction in the workplace the researchers were trying to show. Important insights can be drawn from that validation process. Overall, there appears to be a heightened sensitivity to accept sexual interaction, such as flirting, as sexual harassment and to confuse blatant sexual harassment as flirting. This phenomenon speaks to the difficulty participants had in distinguishing flirting from harassment and vice versa. Given that the identification of harassment is a receiver phenomenon, we should be especially wary of the implications of any sexualized behavior in the workplace.

The flirting condition contained no sexual advances or requests for sexual favors, and it did not demonstrate a hostile environment, verbally or nonverbally--one of which must be present to meet the legal test of sexual harassment. Yet, 40.74 percent of the participants perceived sexual harassment. In both female and male superior conditions, participants identified more verbal sexual harassment

than nonverbal sexual harassment, and there were more perceptions of sexual harassment when the male actor was the superior. Confirming participants' confusion between flirting and sexual harassment were their reports that the flirting they observed was somewhat appropriate workplace behavior.

Likewise, the sexual harassment scene displayed no outwardly friendly flirting behaviors. The verbal statements of the superiors were controlling and negative. In addition, the superior did not smile pleasantly or act as if the subordinate had the opportunity to refuse his/her advances. Yet, 78.89 percent of participants believed flirting occurred. In both the female and male conditions, participants perceived more nonverbal than verbal flirting, and there were more perceptions of flirting in the male superior condition. The participants were accurate in identifying verbal sexual harassment as being more prevalent. However, participants perceived the nonverbals for this condition more in terms of flirting than as sexual harassment. One would expect that the nonverbals accompanying verbally harassing comments to also be judged as harassment.

What accounts for this confusion? Certainly the national media has drawn our attention to the issue of sexual harassment starting with the Clarence Thomas confirmation hearings. Discrimination of all types has been explored under the label of "political correctness." Many organizations have adopted sexual harassment policies and procedures for penalizing or removing harassers from the workplace. While this heightened sensitivity is good in helping us to refrain from behavior that is inappropriate and offensive, the readiness with which we have adopted a new awareness about sexual harassment may have extended too far if one believes that innocent flirting is appropriate and acceptable interaction in the workplace. Gutek and Konrad's (1990) conceptualization of sexualization of the workplace may be an important, yet understudied, variable of organizational communication climate and culture. The standards of appropriateness for non-harassing sexualized behavior may vary from organization to organization, but the legal tests of sexual harassment appear to be becoming more stabilized as evidenced by reviews of legal cases.

Research Question 2

Categorization by ethical ideology did not result in differing perceptions of flirting or sexually harassing behaviors in this study. Further analysis will allow us to assess if ideology type varies across

conditions. We would expect that situationists would vary in the amount and type of sexual harassment they perceive while absolutists would always perceive a specific behavior (e.g., sitting on the desk) as sexual harassment.

Ellis et al. (1992) reported a similar overall finding. However, they also reported that "although no difference was found between the average perception scores between the two ideological groups . . . a significant relationship was found between a relativist ethical position and perceptions of sexual harassment and a slightly negative relationship was found between an idealist ethical position and perceptions of sexual harassment though this was nonsignificant" (p. 17).

In spite of the nonsignificant findings reported in this study, and the weak findings reported in the Ellis et al. study, the relationship that might exist between ethical ideology and perception of sexual harassment is still interesting and needs to be explored further.

A major interest in the sexual harassment literature has been in identifying strategies for combating the problem (e.g., Bingham, 1988; Booth-Butterfield, 1986; Clarke, 1982; Livingston, 1982; Peters & Van Bronkhorst, 1982; Rowe, 1981). Many factors operate to sustain and encourage sexual harassment in the workplace (Brewer & Berk, 1982), so the problem has been attacked on several levels. Livingston (1982) suggests that potential remedies for sexual harassment can be grouped at three levels: *sociostructural* (e.g., changing the distribution of political and economic power in society), *organizational* (e.g., developing policies, grievance procedures, and educational programs dealing with sexual harassment), and *individual* (e.g., taking legal action or directly confronting the harasser verbally). *At none of these levels are there suggestions that sexual harassment is an ethical issue involving choices about "right" and "wrong."* Sexual harassment needs to continue to be explored as an ethical issue in the workplace.

Hypothesis 1

The canonical correlations only identified the empathy subscales as significantly correlated with the perceptions of flirting and sexual harassment. In the flirting to sexual harassment condition with the female as the superior, those participants with the ability to place themselves in fictional settings (fantasy, .801) also identified more verbal sexual harassment (.569) and tended not to identify

nonverbal behaviors as sexually harassing. These results again point to the confusion that exists about mixed sexual messages in the workplace.

While one would expect that the nonverbal behaviors accompanying blatant verbal sexual harassment to also be labeled as sexual harassment, this appears not to be the case. Perhaps the confusion exists because females are not frequently seen in the superior role or as harassing male subordinates. Although in the videotape, her verbal comments definitely turn to sexual harassment (see Appendix A) her nonverbal behaviors are not aggressive. She does not touch the intimate parts of his body nor does she physically abuse him. Thus, her suggestive movements, although accompanied by controlling and negative verbal acts, are perceived more positively as flirting.

Hypothesis 2

Once again, canonical correlations were used in this exploratory analysis of the data to determine the relationships among the listening style preferences and the identification of flirting and sexual harassment. Two tests were significant. In the flirting condition with the female as superior, those participants with a preference for action (.697) and content (.778) listening styles are not likely to identify verbal flirting (-.242) or verbal sexual harassment (-.522) , but do identify nonverbal sexual harassment (.582). This can be interpreted as those with action and content listening preferences to need to hear concrete evidence of sexual harassment before identifying it as such. This finding is consistent with the conceptual descriptions of the two listening style preferences.

In the other flirting condition with the male as superior, participants with a preference for the people listening style (.564) tended to identify verbal flirting (.463). Thus, it seems that those with a preference for this style of listening may be more accurate perceivers (and receivers) of such sexualized behavior in the workplace.

Summary

The data from this exploratory study point to the confusion that exists in distinguishing flirting from sexually harassing behavior. It is important to note that participants were able to distinguish friendly behavior from flirting and friendly behavior from sexually harassing behavior. But once the

superior adopted a sexualized approach to cross-sex interaction, the ability to distinguish flirting from sexual harassment blurred. With further analysis of the data (specifically identifying which verbal statements and which nonverbal behavioral cues are considered flirting and/or sexually harassing), the researchers believe that the predictors of ethical ideology, empathy, and listening style preference will perform more effectively, leading to new insights about the perceptions of sexualized behavior in the workplace.

Notes

1 The Authors Thank Amy Brown And Jeff Solomon For Their Help With Data Collection.

2 Subsequent factor analysis by Mahon (1991) and Watson & Barker (1992) resulted in dropping the *entertainment-oriented* factor and substituting a *time-oriented* factor. The authors of the current study used older version of the LPP which contained the *entertainment-oriented* factor. That factor was dropped from the current study because of low internal reliability.

3 Under these guidelines, sexual harassment is generally agreed to be: unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual, or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment. These definitions are used by courts in determining the legality of sexual harassment claims. Although untested in collecting participant reactions, the only published report of a sexual harassment scale (Booth-Butterfield, 1987) was developed largely from surveys of perceptions of sexual harassment, not from legal definitions, and does not place the harassing behavior in an interaction context (Booth-Butterfield, 1986).

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Figure 1

Montgomery's Flirting Behaviors and Interpretations

Behaviors

Eye behavior (wink, stare)

Physical contact (touch, bump)

Conversational talk (small talk, compliment)

Facial expressions (smile, blush)

Proximity (move close, dance together)

Voice (laugh, whisper)

Body movement (posture, blow a kiss)

Appearance (wear attractive clothes, perfume)

Goods and services (buy drink, give card)

Interpretations

Playful (joke around, play fight)

Friendly (show attention, be polite)

Sexual (sexual innuendo, suggestive stance)

Submissive (act modest, act dumb)

Controlling (show off, act impressive)

Disinterested (be hard to get, put person down)

TABLE 1

Judgments about EEOC Definitions for Harassing Behaviors

Condition	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4	Item 5
(1) Flirting					
Female Superior	1.700	2.300	2.400	2.600	2.400
Male Superior	2.642	2.214	2.286	2.214	2.643
(2) Flirting to Harassment					
Female Superior	3.540	3.162	2.946	2.919	3.486
Male Superior	3.579	3.079	3.000	2.868	3.316
(3) Harassment					
Female Superior	3.814	3.511	3.233	3.279	3.581
Male Superior	3.696	3.413	3.391	3.391	3.674

TABLE 2

Appropriateness Ratings of Flirting Behavior

Condition	Appropriateness
(1) Flirting	
Female Superior	1.279
Male Superior	1.143
(2) Flirting to Harassment	
Female Superior	0.475
Male Superior	0.611
(3) Harassment	
Female Superior	0.222
Male Superior	0.200

TABLE 3

Variable Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Internal Reliability	Mean	s.d.
Ethical Ideologies			
Idealism	.836	3.624	.618
Relativism	.785	3.160	.643
Empathy			
Fantasy	.833	23.256	5.984
Perspective Taking	.829	25.156	4.862
Empathic Concern	.803	28.056	4.182
Personal Distress	.717	17.811	4.581
Listening			
People	.603	2.800	1.203
Action	.619	2.402	1.164
Content	.579	3.233	1.175
Enter	.421	3.070	1.263

n = 90

Listening measures drops 12 and 22

TABLE 4

Variable Subscale Correlations

Variable	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Ethical Ideologies									
1 Idealism	-.031	.056	.239	.443	.060	.235	-.228	-.074	.146
2 Relativism		.096	-.008	-.093	.117	-.110	-.075	.012	.208
Empathy									
3 Fantasy			.177	.276	.366	.047	-.135	.101	.167
4 Perspective Taking				.505	.064	.368	-.149	.101	-.152
5 Empathic Concern					.224	.344	-.135	.024	.162
6 Personal Distress						.049	-.145	-.158	.320
Listening									
7 People							-.150	.112	.091
8 Action								.036	.005
9 Content									-.055
10 Entertainment									

correlations underlined are significant at .05

TABLE 5

Descriptive Statistics for Verbal Utterances and Nonverbal Behaviors

	Female Superior			**Male** Superior		
	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Flirting						
Verbal Flirting	48	1.812	1.607	42	2.286	1.551
Verbal Harassment	48	0.480	1.031	42	0.595	1.037
Nonverbal Flirting	48	1.438	0.873	42	1.405	0.939
Nonverbal Harassment	48	0.167	0.519	42	0.214	0.520*
Flirting to Harassment						
Verbal Flirting	48	1.375	1.160	43	1.465	1.437**
Verbal Harassment	48	1.479	1.288	43	1.930	1.261
Nonverbal Flirting	48	1.458	1.031	43	1.721	1.333
Nonverbal Harassment	48	0.917	1.007	43	0.907	1.065
Harassment						
Verbal Flirting	42	1.000	1.687	47	1.170	1.761
Verbal Harassment	42	2.310	1.731	47	2.851	1.268
Nonverbal Flirting	42	2.262	1.482	47	2.574	1.754
Nonverbal Harassment	42	1.643	1.428	47	2.447	1.874
Friendly*						

* Effect for gender of participant; t=-2.707, df 40,0, p=.010; males identified more nonverbal sexually harassing behaviors than females.

** Effect for gender of participant; t=-2.905, df 41,0, p=.006; males identified more verbal flirting utterances than females.

*Only 8 participants perceived flirting in the friendly scenes; no participants perceived sexual harassing behaviors.

TABLE 6

Canonical Correlation
Condition Two Flirting to Sexual Harassment--*Female* Superior

	First Canonical Variate Pair	
	Correlation	Coefficient
Empathy		
Fantasy	.801	.936
Perspective Taking	-.341	-.233
Empathic Concern	-.055	-.116
Personal Distress	-.319	-.515
percent of Variance	.221	
Redundancy	.085	
Behaviors		
Verbal Flirting	.291	.231
Verbal Sexual Harassment	.569	.754
Nonverbal Flirting	.388	.428
Nonverbal Sexual Harassment	-.496	-.682
percent of Variance	.201	
Redundancy	.078	
Canonical Correlation	.621	

F=1.729, df 16, p=.050

TABLE 7

Canonical Correlation
Condition One Flirting--*Female* Superior

	First Canonical Variate Pair	
	Correlation	Coefficient
Listening		
People	-.139	.181
Action	.697	.687
Content	.778	.703
percent of Variance	.370	
Redundancy	.242	
Behaviors		
Verbal Flirting	-.242	-.287
Verbal Sexual Harassment	-.522	-.684
Nonverbal Flirting	-.518	-.477
Nonverbal Sexual Harassment	.582	.561
percent of Variance	.234	
Redundancy	.091	
Canonical Correlation	.623	

F=2.570, df 12, p=.006

TABLE 8

Canonical Correlation
Condition One Flirting--*Male* Superior

	First Canonical Variate Pair	
	Correlation	Coefficient
Listening		
People	.564	.855
Action	.352	.492
Content	.039	-.084
percent of Variance	.148	
Redundancy	.063	
Behaviors		
Verbal Flirting	.463	.771
Verbal Sexual Harassment	.062	.292
Nonverbal Flirting	.397	.559
Nonverbal Sexual Harassment	-.156	-.354
percent of Variance	.100	
Redundancy	.043	
Canonical Correlation	.652	

F=1.975, df 12, p=.039

APPENDIX A

Condition One -- Flirting

Verbal Utterances	Nonverbals in Female Superior	Nonverbals in Male Superior
(1) It's official: your promotion has been approved. (2) I'm pleased to be the first to congratulate you.	[1] Female places hands on desk. [2] Female extends hand to shake male's hand.	[1] Male extends hand to shake female's hand.
[3] Thank you. I appreciate all your help. [4] I couldn't have done it without you.	[3] They continue to shake hands.	[1] They continue to shake hands. [2] Male clasps his hands together.
[5] I'm glad you realize that. [6] It makes me think my contributions don't always go unnoticed.	[4] Female's hands back on desk.	[2] Male gestures. [3] Male clasps hands together again.
[7] Don't worry. [8] I've noticed them.	None	[4] Female glances down.
[9] Well, I guess that's fair since I've noticed so much about you.	[5] Female smiles and traces the desktop with her fingertips	[5] Male smiles. [6] Male sits on desk. [14] Male leans toward female.
[10] Don't embarrass me.	[6] Male shifts, looks down, and laughs	[7] Female shifts and laughs. [6] Male still sitting desk.
[11] I wouldn't. [12] Especially since we're going to be working so closely. [13] I wouldn't want to blow my chance to get to know you better.	[7] Female sits on desk. [10] Female leans toward male.	[8] Male smiles. [9] Male arches eyebrows. [10] Male nods.
[14] Is that why you helped me?	None	[11] Female strokes pen.
[15] Could be.	[8] Female smiles. [9] Tone of voice	[12] Male smiles. [13] Tone of voice

Condition Two -- Flirting to Harassing

Verbal Utterances	Nonverbals in Female Superior	Nonverbals in Male Superior
(1) It's official: your promotion has been approved. (2) I'm pleased to be the first to congratulate you.	[1] Female places hands on desk. [2] Female takes male's hand and shakes it.	[1] Male takes female's hand and shakes it.
[3] Oh. that's wonderful news!	[3] They continue to shake hands as [4] male smiles.	[2] They continue to shake hands as [3] female smiles.
[4] So, how are you going to celebrate.	[5] Female grasps males hand with both of hers.	[4] Male grasps females hand with both of his.
[5] I don't know.	[5] Female continues grasping hand as male stops smiling. [6] Male shrugs.	[4] Male continues grasping hand as female stops smiling.
[6] I could give you a few suggestions.	[7] Female sits on desk. [13] Female leans.	[5] Male leans into desk.
[7] That really won't be necessary.	[8] Male clears throat and pull away from desk.	[6] Female pulls away from desk.
[8] I assumed you'd be more than willing to celebrate with me [9] since I was the one responsible for you getting the promotion. [10] I've already made the arrangements.	[9] Female laughs. [10] Male looks down. [11] Female traces desktop with fingertips.	[7] Male laughs. [8] Male sits on desk. [10] Male nods slightly. [11] Male motions to self.
	[12] Tone of voice.	[12] Tone of voice.

Condition Three -- Harassing

Verbal Utterances	Nonverbals in Female Superior	Nonverbals in Male Superior
(1) It's official: your promotion has been approved. (2) I'm pleased to be the first to congratulate you. [3] I just wanted to make sure you understand your new capacities of serving the company. [4] There will be many things you'll be asked to do that don't fall under your written job description.	[1] Female places hands on desk. [2] Female extends hand to shake male's hand. [3] Male takes female's hand. [4] Female grasps males hand with both of hers. [5] Female puts her hands back on desk. [6] Male looks down at desk.	[1] Male extends hand to shake female's hand. [2] Female takes his hand. [3] Male grasps her hand hand with both of his. [4] Male touches female's elbow and [5] moves up to her shoulder.
[5] I'm sure I'll have more responsibility. [6] That's one of the things I'm looking forward to in the new position.	[7] Female sits on desk. [8] Male plays with pen. [13] Female leans toward male.	[6] Female looks at male's hand and pulls away. [7] Female plays with pen. [8] Male sits on desk. [16] Male leans toward female.
[7] I can help you with the new position. [8 Male] Make sure you go in with total ease. [8 Female] Make sure you settle in with little difficulty. [9] I'm eager to help; [10] of course, you realize you'll have to take on a few extra responsibilities toward me, if you know what I mean. [11] I can make ythings so eeasy for you. [12] Without my help, you'll find it impossible to get anything done.	[7] Female continues sitting on desk. [10] Female plays with male's tie.	[9] Male motions to self. [10] Male gestures. [11] Male nods. [12] Female looks down at desk. [13] Mlae motions to self.
[13] Thanks for the offer, but I'm sure I can manage.	[11] Male looks up, straightens tie and moves back.	[14] Female jerks head back.
[14] Don't be so sure. [15] You're going to need me.	None.	None.
	[12] Tone of voice.	[15] Tone of voice.

Condition Four -- Friendly

Verbal Utterances	Nonverbals in Female Superior	Nonverbals in Male Superior
(1) It's official: your promotion has been approved. (2) I'm pleased to be the first to congratulate you.	[1] Female places hands on desk. [2] Female extends hand to shake male's hand.	[1] Male extends hand to shake female's hand.
[3] Oh, that's wonderful! [4] I can't believe it.	[3] Male takes female's hand.	[2] Female takes male's hand.
[5] Believe it. [6] It would seem people have been noticing your hard work.	[4] Female places hands on desk.	[3] Male leans on desk.
[7] It's nice to be appreciated.	[5] Male nods slightly.	[4] Female gestures.
[8] You need to start wrapping up projects. [9] And your replacement will need some help. [10] Probably about two weeks total [11] Then you're upstairs with me.	[6] Female nods and raps desk with fingertips. [7] Female gestures.	[5] Male nods and sits on desk. [6] Male gestures up(stairs).
[12] I can't wait.	None.	[13] Actually, neither can I. [14] I think we're going to work well together.
[8] Male gestures under speech.	[9] Female gestures. [10] Female nods.	[7] Male nods.
	[11] Tone of voice.	[8] Tone of voice. [9] Smiling.